

FUN FOR THE "ARGUS" STAFF

A Newspaper Story Written for the Morning Astorian.

ON that day the Argus staff had had an unusually trying time of it. To begin with, the press dispatches had consisted chiefly of Russian war news, which had been pouring in steadily all day, filled with an unusual and most discouraging quantity of unpronounceable and unspellable names—that is, to any one except an expert in Russian and Asiatic nomenclature. To an ordinary editor, proofreader or typesetter they were simply so many jagged mountain chains of consonants, with an occasional vowel thrown in for good measure. To cap the climax one of the hand set columns got knocked into pl just as the paper was about ready for the press, which made a great improvement in the spelling of some of the names, but ruined the article in other respects, so that it was necessary to reset it, which was done, putting all hands on the work and rushing it through at race horse speed in order not to delay the edition more than could be helped.

The result was—well, the Argus got out about on time, but as managing editor of the paper Barney Blake had no reason to feel proud of that particular column of war news as it appeared in print. Some of it was still pl, but it came out all right in the second edition, also in the third and fourth. Blake saw to that personally, as he expected Colonel Starbuck, the proprietor of the Daily Argus, in some time during the afternoon, and, knowing him to be of an excitable temperament—the colonel often swore the Argus with its blunders would be the death of him—he did not care particularly to have him see that dispatch as originally printed.

The colonel failed to show up at the usual hour, however, and Barney was rather glad than otherwise that he didn't.

What he needed—in fact, what the entire Argus staff needed just then—was a little wholesome recreation instead of an interview with or a lecture from Colonel Starbuck—something to take off the tension instead of screwing it up tighter.

It is no wonder, then, that when an unexpected opportunity for innocent fun presented itself Barney joyfully and eagerly seized upon it and made the most of it.

The opportunity in question came in the shape of a caller—one of the oddest looking fish that had drifted into the Argus office in many moons.

One quick glance at the linen duster which hung loosely about his robust form and the last year's straw hat



"RECKON YOU MUST BE THE—ER—SASSIETY EDITOR, EH?"

perched on the back of his head, and Barney had sized him up for a horny handed agriculturist—probably one of the country subscribers coming in, as they frequently did, to look over the Argus establishment and see the modus operandi of getting out a daily newspaper.

"Hello, Uncle Horace! Looking for any one in particular?" saluted Blake as the man with airy toga and out of date headgear paused inside the doorway and glanced inquiringly around the room.

"How did you happen to light on to my cog-no-men before I even opened my trapdoor?" queried the caller whimsically. "I always heard the Argus had a mighty smart staff, and now I know ft. Reckon you must be the—er—sassy editor, eh?"

"No; I'm only the managing editor," explained Barney. "The society editor is the chap in the corner with the chrysanthemum hair and a rose in his buttonhole. You will also recognize him by the diamond ring that flashes on his 'write' hand as he dashes off his eloquent and sparkling society bonnets and his fascinating descriptions of Mrs. Brown's colonial ball, Mrs. O'Raffer-

too, most of them. Now, seeing I have been running a newspaper myself for the past fifteen years, I had a glimmering sort of an idea when I drifted in here today that possibly I knew something about the business, but I find I was mistaken. I'm only a jibbering idiot in the newspaper business, from the Argus standpoint, and, having bought the paper, I've got to start in at the bottom and learn the trade all over again from its highly accomplished and courteous staff. Good joke on me, Mr. Blake, isn't it?"

Barney—not to mention the rest of the Argus staff—looked as if it would be a great relief to him at that moment if the earth were to open and swallow up the entire establishment.

"W-why—er—who—who are you?" he stammered uneasily.

"I? Oh, I'm nobody much. I'm only Uncle Horace, the old hayseed that dropped in on you a few minutes ago to take lessons in journalism and the



"WHY, HOW D'YE DO, MAJOR?" EXCLAIMED THE COLONEL.

art of entertaining callers. But here comes Colonel Starbuck. Perhaps I can get him to introduce me. How are you, colonel? A trifle late in keeping your appointment, aren't you?"

"Why, how d'ye do, major?" exclaimed Colonel Starbuck cordially. "I am sorry I've kept you waiting, but it has given you a chance to learn something about the Argus establishment and the staff."

"Yes, it has," interposed the caller dryly.

"Pretty bright looking crowd, major, aren't they? Boys, this is Major Hayden, the former owner and editor of the Centerville Courier. He has bought out my interests in the Argus, taking possession at once, and I trust the new relationship between you as employer and—

"Hello! What has been going on here? What is that sign you are carrying around on your back, major? Here, let me remove it. 'Turnips For Sale,' eh? I surely hope that miserable attempt at wit was not placed on your back by any one connected with this establishment."

"I am afraid it was, colonel," was the calm reply. "You see, the boys mistook me for one of your rural subscribers, and they have been having some amusement at my expense. But I see they are pretty well worked up over it, so perhaps we had better finish our interview in your private office and give our humorous friends a chance to think the matter over quietly by themselves."

Half an hour later when the new proprietor of the Argus emerged from the inner sanctum he found a rather solemn looking crowd awaiting his appearance, and Barney Blake's erstwhile smiling countenance was the most sepulchrally solemn of them all as he stepped forward and gravely handed him a folded document.

Opening it, Mr. Hayden read as follows:

Major Hayden:
Dear Sir—We have had our innings, and it is now your turn. As the future proprietor of the Daily Argus you doubtless will not care to retain in your employ the staff of long eared, unmitigated donkeys now connected with the paper, and we herewith hand you our resignations, to take effect immediately, together with our apologies for the unparadise treatment received by you at our hands this afternoon.

This note was signed by Managing Editor Blake and the other members of the Argus staff, and below the signatures was the following postscript:

P. S.—The boys were bound to share the blame equally with myself and hand in their resignations with mine, but as I am the head of the office and the others took their cue from me I feel that I alone should shoulder the responsibility for what occurred, and as an act of justice to my fellow employees I ask that my resignation alone be accepted and that, no one else shall be made to suffer for my fault. The rest of the boys are a pretty good lot. They will serve you faithfully and redeem themselves in your eyes. I am sure, if you will give them a chance. Yours respectfully,

BARNEY BLAKE.

"Resignations declined with thanks! You are all going to stick right to your jobs until I tell you different," announced Major Hayden bluntly as he finished reading the above communication and, tearing it into strips, dropped it into the wastebasket. "You've had your lesson, boys, and I guess there isn't much danger of any more such exhibitions as we have had here this afternoon. I'm willing to try you anyhow."

"But I'm glad you added that postscript, Mr. Blake," he concluded, reach-

ing over and giving Barney's hand a hearty shake. "It has a nasty ring to it, and I reckon we'll get along together all right."

ty's French fete, Mrs. Robinson's Italian musicale or Mrs. John Q. Smith's Japanese lawn party. Oh, he's a genius—our society editor."

"You don't say!"

"Yes. The paper simply couldn't exist without him."

"That so? Queer Colonel Starbuck never told me anything about him," mused the caller.

"Oh, you know the colonel, do you?" asked Blake.

"Yes, we're what I might call slightly acquainted. I had a little business transaction with him the other day."

"Boid you a gold brick, I suppose," and Barney winked humorously at the rest of the staff.

"Don't know yet whether it will turn out to be a gold brick or not. Reckon I shan't worry any if it does. I've invested in gold bricks before, and the way I figure it it's nobody's business but my own if I do it again."

"Oh, I see," said Barney smoothly. "A trifle touchy on the gold brick question, eh, Mr.—er—Hayseed, is it?"

"Not quite. Hayden happens to be my name. Didn't make quite as slick a guess as you did on the Horace. But go ahead and call me Hayseed if you like. You can remember that name better than Hayden probably, and I guess it fits me about as well as the other, anyhow. Don't it strike you that way?"

"Oh, no, you're no hayseed! You're right from Chicago or New York city—anybody could tell that from the cut of your jib!" And Barney again passed the wink to the others, who all felt in duty bound to roar at the managing editor's wit.

"Nice, genial staff you've got. Chuck full of fun, ain't they? I hope they're not laughing at me. Hain't got a 'Please Kick Me' sign pinned to my back, have I?"

"That's all right, Uncle Horace," purred Barney. "Don't go to getting excited. The boys are just spoiling for a little fun—been working under steam pressure today—but none of them would ever be guilty of—er—by George, they have, just the same! But it doesn't read 'Please Kick Me'; it says 'We're From the Farm.' And if I only knew the deep dyed villain who pinned it on you I'd discharge him this instant—yes, sir, this very instant—and I'd tell him not to come around again until tomorrow morning."

"He added in a stage whisper as he stepped around behind the rural looking visitor and removed the offending sign, deftly replacing it by another handed him by one of the crowd, reading, 'Turnips For Sale!'"

"There; that looks better," observed Barney, at which everybody roared promptly once more.

"Not quite so much levity, boys," said Barney reprovingly. "I am going to show our friend here through the Argus establishment, and I want to see how well you can behave while"—

Biff!

A big wad of paper came sailing across the office and caromed on the ear of the caller.

"That was our baseball editor who did that," explained Barney coolly. "Force of habit, I suppose. He probably imagined he was throwing a ball at first base. Don't let that happen again, Higgins."

"All right, sir," glibly responded the young man who had thrown the paper. "Mistake, anyhow. I was aiming at the wastebasket."

"Well, seeing you've apologized, it is all right," said Barney, with hock solemnity.

"Now, Mr. Hayseed—I should say Hayden—you have already been introduced to our baseball and society editors, and if you will cast your optics over the rest of the collection of geniuses before you I will enlighten you as to their duties, so that when you go back to the farm you will understand the secret of the Argus' success in gathering and disseminating the daily news of the entire world, including the city and county of Boomopolis."

"The exceedingly tall, thin young man with the short hair and prominent ears is Mr. Perkins, our secret service reporter and war correspondent. His build, as you will notice, fits him admirably for the position. He is so thin he can crawl over a transom without the slightest difficulty."

"You don't say!"

"Fact, I assure you. And that is why a thin man has a marked advantage over a 200 pounder. It requires less gas to carry him, and if he falls from a balloon it doesn't muss him up so much as it would a fat man, thereby effecting a big saving in doctors' bills for repairing broken ribs, etc."

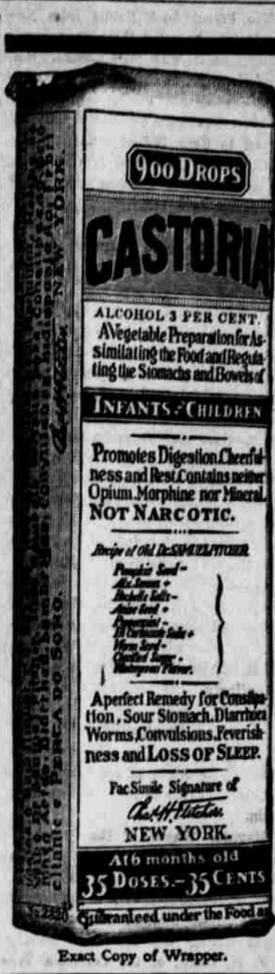
"I see. Quite an idea, that."

"Yes, and, besides, a thin man occupies less space and leaves more room in the basket of the balloon for the wireless message apparatus. You see, as fast as the war correspondent in a balloon gets a message ready to send in to the paper he grinds it out on a wireless sending machine, something like a phonograph, and it goes flying off into space until it strikes the Aerial Wireless Telegraph line, over which it whizzes through the air with almost lightning speed until it reaches the Argus office. It would do you good to see our office boy catching the messages in a wire basket as they come flying in at the window."

"Well, well!"

"Oh, I tell you there is a pile to learn about the newspaper business when a fellow once sets about it. Now, I rather imagine you've learned a few things in that line today, Mr. Hayseed—I mean Hayden—that you never knew before."

"I reckon I have picked up just a



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few stray hints about the newspaper business," drew the man in the linen duster, and then he suddenly straightened up, and the awkward countryman of a moment before was transformed into something quite different as he went on in crisp, business-like tones: "Exceedingly valuable ones,

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